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ABSTRACT

A cooperative teacher training program has resulted in graduate preparation of teachers from the varied geographic areas of Peru in the field of mental retardation. With opening for at least 20 teachers in each promotion, with 10 supported by the Ministry of Education, the expansion of services for exceptional children has become a reality. Project HOPE consultants are paired with selected Peruvian counterparts who for future promotions will assume teaching responsibilities within the comprehensive curriculum. (Author/SBH)

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Teacher Training Program in Mental Retardation Initiated Through Support of Project HOPE

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Running Head: Teacher Training Program in Mental Retardation

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Abstract

The teacher training program, cooperatively supported by the Ministry of Education of Peru, the National University of Trujillo, the Carlos A. Mannucci School for Exceptional Children and Project HOPE, has resulted in graduate preparation of teachers from the varied geographic areas of Peru in the field of mental retardation. With openings for at least twenty teachers in each promotion, with ten supported by the Ministry of Education, the expansion of services for exceptional children has become a reality. Project HOPE consultants are paired with selected Peruvian counterparts who for future promotions will assume teaching responsibilities within the comprehensive curriculum.

Teacher Training Program in Mental Retardation
Initiated Through Support of Project HOPE

The identification of the need for special educators and the planning of teacher preparation programs are frequently assumed to be the responsibility of designated personnel at the national level. The graduate level program in mental retardation in Trujillo, Peru, which was cooperatively undertaken through an agreement involving the National Ministry of Education, the National University of Trujillo, the Carlos A. Mannucci School for Exceptional Children and Project HOPE, was initiated primarily, however, through the vision and efforts of the director of the Carlos A. Mannucci School for Exceptional Children who recognized (a) the extreme need for special educators throughout Northern Peru, particularly in remote areas, and (b) the tendency of personnel who received training through a series of workshops or in "non-on-going" programs held in a country's capitol city to fail to return to teach in the town, village or remote area from which they came.

Project HOPE was approached to help catalyze an existing relationship between the afore-mentioned parties in the establishment of the first graduate teacher training program for special educators in Peru, and also the first approved program of its type within the country.

Through the joint agreement of involved parties, the first promotion was begun in July, 1976. Approval by CONUP, the Consejo Nacional de la Universidad Peruana, of this Special Education Program as a National University of Trujillo academic program in education was obtained in July, 1977. The plan undertaken provides initial professor consultants, supported by Project HOPE, for each of whom the National University of Trujillo appoints Peruvian professors as counterparts. These counterparts are in essence "in training" during the initial semester of a course for which they, in following promotions, assume responsibility. The National Ministry of Education assumes the responsibility for appointing and supporting ten teachers from varied areas of Peru: the desert, the sierra and the jungle. Ten additional positions are filled by examinations administered by the University of Trujillo. The program is of two years duration, four semesters, with a total of eighty credits. A semester comprises seventeen weeks, in which students receive 12 hours of theory and 16 hours of practicum.

The primary purpose of this program, Segunda Especializacion en Educacion Especial, Retardo Mental, as approved by all involved parties is to train specialists in the education of the mentally retarded to meet local, regional and national needs. Each student completing the program will be able to:

-diagnose the child who is mentally retarded and place

him at the most appropriate level for educational and social training at the earliest possible time

-distinguish and identify the educational needs of non-retarded children -- those with severe learning and development problems (deaf, blind, autistic, and those with cerebral paralysis, emotional disturbances and language problems)

-guide the learning of the child with an individual plan of development of all potential to the maximum in the areas of knowledge, behavior and psychomotor activity

-develop the social, work and artistic adaptation of the child; implement vocational training considering the prognosis of each particular case

-plan and organize group work in the classroom, stimulating mutual help and support between the students

-inform, guide and support the family, and the community in general

-cooperate with the multi-disciplinary team involving the pediatrician, neurologist, physical therapist, clinical psychologist, audiologist, laboratory technologist, nutritionist, social worker, and public health staff

-organize the administrative aspects, putting special emphasis on cooperative action on the part of parents, the Ministry of Education, and other vital community units for the improved well being of the children

-educate the community in the field of special education, putting emphasis on aspects of prevention and control

-study the activities developing in the field, and support via research, known experiences and achievements in the field. (Universidad Nacional De Trujillo, Programa Academico De Educacion, Prospecto: Segunda Especializacion En Educacion Especial, Retardo Mental, 1976)

The strength of this type of training program lies not only in the close relationship and meaningful input of co-operating agencies in instruction and evaluation; but also in the amount of time spent in daily contact with exceptional children. More than one-half of the courses are taught at the practicum site; the students evaluate theory daily in practice, and have on-going opportunities to observe and work with master teachers.

The classes in the Carlos A. Mannucci School follow a "family learning center" approach, as approximately eighty handicapped children are placed within groups which are heterogeneous in age, handicap and level of functioning. With a teacher who assumes a "head-of-the-family" role, children pursue adaptive and academic skills both essential and desirable for adequacy in immediate and anticipated life situations. In this type of setting a pre-school handicapped child can find her place. With the teacher

as the primary contact person, she can locate her classroom, her chair, her position at her table --initially to work with the teacher, but in time to work with the teacher and another child nearby. Person-to-person, place and activity security are established for all children. Careful attention is given to readiness; sequence and pacing of learning is evident from pre-school activities to sheltered workshop tasks provided for older teenagers and young adults working within this area of the curriculum. Teachers in the training program learn as they work directly with the handicapped children, initially in this setting, and ultimately within schools in the community.

Additional experiences in the Rehabilitation Center, with infants and young children in the pueblos jovenes, as well as observations within the hospitals in Trujillo and Lima extend and enhance the teacher training program as each student prepares to return to the home base if receiving Ministry support, or to a new position if an entrant into the program through regular University procedure. Throughout the training period, the teachers are made aware of the need for parental cooperation and support if educational programs for exceptional children are to be effective. The importance of maintaining good public relations, as well as of identifying and utilizing existing community resources is emphasized through active learning within the school settings.

The teacher training program in mental retardation in Trujillo, Peru, conceived through the long range vision of a special educator, established through the cooperative efforts of the Ministry of Education, a National University, a School for Exceptional Children and Project HOPE, a People to People Foundation, in August, 1978 begins its third promotion. Through its comprehensive curriculum, the dedication of Peruvian counterparts, and the teachers trained through the years, the future of the special children of Peru -- even those in the remote areas -- will be affected positively. For many handicapped, tomorrow will be a brighter day.

Reference

Universidad Nacional De Trujillo, Programa Academico De Educacion, Prospecto: Segunda Especializacion En Educacion Especial, Retardo Mental, 1976.